

himself? And why should any sane being, fortunate enough to be able to produce living work of his own, feel 'compelled' or even 'tempted' to take a tearful farewell of his Muse in order to go 'killing reputations'? It is a delightful picture, surely—the republic of letters in danger, and English literature screaming to be rescued from the reputation of Mr. Meredith. So the Aztec kings at the new year swore to keep the sun in its proper course, and the monks in Rabelais watched to protect the moon from the wolves.

The truth is, I think, that critics are extremely impotent in either giving or destroying reputations of any permanence; and we should surely be thankful that it is so. My blood runs cold at the idea of a dictator of English letters, even Mr. Eliot—what visions of hungry thousands being fed on Crashaw and Lancelot Andrewes, and even smaller Anglican and Catholic fishes! And if it is improbable that critics do much good to the world by assuming the style of self-appointed censors and inquisitors, it seems to me that they certainly do themselves,; a good deal of harm. It is easy to enjoy being a Jeremiah.

The taste is soon acquired, and that mantle had already worn pretty threadbare by the end of the last century after passing through so many hands. Such prophets come in the end to look about for reasons for weeping over Jerusalem. For one thing, there are so many

cinemas,
Or again, mourns Mr. Eliot, Marvell *&ait
une belle
ame, comme on ne fait plus a Londres'. How
on earth do
we know (even if Marvell, for that matter,
had been
'fait a Londres') ? Or again: 'Matthew Arnold
was intelli-
gent, and by so much difference as the
presence of one
intelligent man makes, our age is inferior to
that of
Arnold.' Which must mean, if anything
whatever, either
that there was one intelligent man alive in
1850, and